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SUMMER 2011

Platform

Collaboratives Take On TOD & Equity Issues

By Abigail Thorne-Lyman
Project Director

Partnerships in support of equitable transit-oriented development – such as the Great Communities Collaborative (GCC) in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative in the Twin Cities – have been around for several years. These collaborations bring together local and national philanthropy with non-profit and community-based organizations to ensure that all populations have access to the benefits provided by transit. Some groups, such as the GCC, are focused on ensuring that station area plans around existing fixed-guideway transit consider affordable housing needs and maximize development potential, while others are motivated by workforce development opportunities, mitigating business impacts during transit construction or augmenting access to employment, education and services. Almost all are focused on transit expansion to prepare station areas with policies, financing, and implementation measures that will ensure low- and moderate-income households access to opportunity.

Transit expansion and new funding sources have led other regions to pursue collaborative partnerships as well. In May, the Ford Foundation provided a grant to the Mile High Transit Opportunity Collaborative, a partnership of more than a dozen foundation and non-profit organizations in the Denver region, who will work to ensure that the rapidly expanding transit system will connect low- and moderate-income households to living and working opportunities. While this partnership is new, Denver advocates from Enterprise Community Partners and Reconnecting America have been working for years to highlight the benefits of mixed-income TOD and address housing preservation issues by creating a TOD acquisition fund. The collaborative will take these

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President's Corner

By John Robert Smith
President and CEO

It is time to talk budgets in Washington. The president and Congress are discussing debt ceilings and budget cuts, and "living within our means" is a common refrain. As we engage in this exercise, it is useful to understand that we need to be smart about our cuts and make investments in our future. The rest of the world—including nations that are belt-tightening too, such as Britain—is spending money on infrastructure. There are clear reasons why.

Just take the example of two federal programs: Amtrak and the High-Speed and Intercity Rail (HSIR) Program. The two programs have asked for $2.2 billion and $2.5 billion respectively for next year's budget. The majority of the

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What's Inside:

How SAFETEA-LU Successor Can Help Communities

By Sarah A. Kline
Policy Director
and Alia Anderson
Policy Associate

Each year, the Department of Transportation (DOT) invests billions of dollars in transportation programs that shape our communities and influence the way we live and travel. The debate over the next federal surface transportation authorization provides an opportunity to advocate for changes to DOT's policies and programs to help build a stronger link between the transportation investments funded by the department and the location of housing and jobs in the surrounding communities.

Reconnecting America is working to advance a number of policies in the authorization bill that would improve Americans' access to transit, fund planning efforts that integrate transportation and land use, and support the implementation of equitable transit-oriented development. Some of our key policy priorities in this area include:

Modify The Federal New Starts Program

The federal government's most important discretionary program for funding new transit investments is the New Starts and Small Starts Program. Demand for this program far exceeds its authorized funding levels. (See the newsletter article on the Transit Space Race on Page 8.) The federal transportation bill outlines a process by which the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) rates and prioritizes transit projects for funding. This process has been criticized for adding cost, uncertainty, and time to projects. In order to create a more streamlined and efficient process for project applicants, the New Starts program should eliminate the redundancy between the Federal Transit Administration's Alternatives Analysis (AA) and the similar AA required by the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). To advance those transit projects that will generate the most long-term benefits for regions and the nation, the New Starts evaluation criteria should elevate proposed projects that:

- Better connect job centers with transit.
- Are accompanied by regional or local policies that target community development funds toward the proposed transit corridor or station-area.
- Have plans or established polices in place that support the creation and preservation of affordable housing near transit.

Establish A Transit-Oriented Development Credit Facility Program

There are multiple barriers to the expansion of transit-oriented development, including the challenges associated with financing the infrastructure improvements that are often necessary to create successful TOD. Reconnecting America is working with several organizations to advance a proposal that would create a TOD infrastructure credit facility, through which the federal government would provide bridge loans or credit enhancements on local district-related financing used to construct critical local infrastructure and affordable housing in new and existing transit-oriented development areas.

Establish a Transit-Oriented Development Planning Program

Before a community even reaches the question of financing, there are numerous challenges to address in planning for TOD, including coordination among public agencies and private partners, and regulatory or other barriers to private investment in areas around transit. Reconnecting America has proposed a targeted federal grant program that would support development of specific, implementable TOD plans at the local or regional level. These locally-identified TOD strategies would help reduce red tape and increase coordination between the public and private sectors, reducing the cost and time involved in implementing TOD.

Include Station-Area Planning As Part Of High-Speed and Intercity Rail Program

Reconnecting America is working to preserve the high-speed and intercity passenger rail program so that more Americans will have access to quality transportation alternatives. But such access will require investment not only in the rail service and infrastructure, but also in the areas surrounding the stations to ensure affordable housing and community development takes place. We are working to ensure that any future rail program includes a focus on station-area planning.

Link Housing And Land Use To Innovative Financing Proposals

Given the gap between our nation's infrastructure needs and the amount of investment that the revenues coming into the Highway Trust Fund can support, the Administration and Congress are promoting various innovative financing programs that would leverage additional public and private sector dollars to help fund a variety of transportation projects. But like those projects funded with traditional methods, there is a risk that these "innovatively financed" investments will be made without regard to their impact on local land use, housing affordability, and equity. Reconnecting America, with a team of other interested organizations, has developed proposals that would prioritize those projects that have a community development focus within any innovative financing program.

With limited fiscal resources at the federal, state, and local level, we must make smart decisions with the dollars that we have. For as long as the reauthorization debate continues in Washington, we will continue to make the case that federal transportation investments can have a profound positive effect on communities when they are made in concert with smart land use decisions that are aimed at providing all Americans with quality housing and transportation choices.

President's Corner . . .

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Amtrak request, and all of the HSIR program, is for infrastructure development.

The HSIR program could create 60,000 jobs, and the Amtrak appropriation would save or create a similar number of positions. So, between these two programs alone, we can save or create 110,000 jobs—and invest in infrastructure that makes the nation more productive in the long term.

The New York Times says it well: "Around China, real estate prices and investment have surged in the more than 200 inland cities that have already been connected by high-speed rail in the last three years. Businesses are flocking to these cities, now just a few hours by bullet train from China's busiest and most international metropolises."

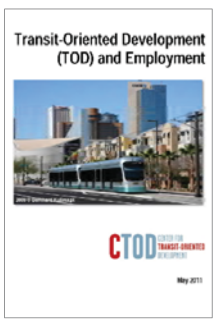
America could use just such a boost. Tell your representatives in Congress to support Amtrak and the High-Speed and Intercity Rail Program.

CTOD's Busy Summer Work

By Sam Zimbabwe
Director, CTOD

The Center for Transit-Oriented Development has continued to be busy with our research, technical assistance, and sharing of best practices on the connections between transit and development. Over the past few months we've released several national research papers, while continuing our applied work in regions across the country and working on several projects that will bear fruit over the summer and fall.

In mid-May, CTOD released two papers on the relationship between transit, economic development, and employment. Work on these papers was led by staff at CTOD partner Strategic Economics.



The first white paper entitled "Transit-Oriented Development and Employment," discusses the relationship between transit and job concentrations and explains the importance of the destination side of the trip for both transit operations and land-use planning in station areas. While employment patterns in the US have generally become more dispersed in the past 20 years, these patterns have taken different forms in different regions. Across the country, though, many of the higher density employment centers with the potential to support transit ridership are now located in suburban contexts in addition to traditional central business districts. These dense employment locations are often appropriate places to introduce other types of land uses that create a mixed-use district capable of supporting transit ridership and a variety of amenities for workers and residents. The paper concludes that the issues related to linking and supporting employment clusters with transit need to become a more central part of the dialogue and implementation approaches to TOD.

The second report, "Transit and Regional Economic Development," focuses primarily on the location decisions of employers. The report analyzes the degree to which different industry sectors are currently attracted to transit-rich locations and examines the character of employment clusters near transit. The paper finds that while jobs have been decentralizing, the patterns have been uneven in terms of geography and industry, with knowledge-based industries clustering closer to transit than manufacturing or "production, distribution, and repair" sectors. The study analyzed job locations in 34 regions around fixed-guideway transit, finding that in these regions, roughly a quarter of all jobs are located within ½-mile of a fixed-guideway transit station. While more jobs have located in transit-rich areas in the past decade, the share of jobs in these locations has been going down relative to overall regional employment. The paper also finds that denser employment seems to be linked with a greater sectoral mix in transit zones.

In addition to these research papers, CTOD has been engaged in efforts across the country, including:

- Finalizing a Strategic Plan for the Portland Metro TOD Program, identifying a set of approaches for Metro to leverage its direct investment in TOD projects and targeting those investments to the places best prepared to catalyze development.
- Working with the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in the San Francisco Bay Area to rethink its groundbreaking TOD Policy, adopted in 2005 with CTOD sup-

port. The update will address the changing conditions in the region in the past six years and set a future course for regional investments in TOD.

- Working in collaboration with ULI Minnesota, Hennepin County, and the jurisdictions along the planned Southwest Light Rail Corridor, to develop a corridor-level approach to TOD in coordination with ongoing transit planning.
- Initiating a project with the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University to develop a TOD Rating System based on our Performance-Based TOD Typology that will inform policy and investment decisions in the Boston region.
- Facilitating a roundtable of 21 transit agencies and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) staff on the challenges and opportunities of Joint Development, and how FTA can clarify existing guidance to facilitate expanded use of Joint Development by transit agencies.

We're looking forward to an exciting summer of new products and resources to help communities planning for transit and TOD. In the next few months we anticipate:

- A comprehensive upgrade to the National TOD Database (toddata.cnt.org) incorporating the 2005-2009 American Community Survey, an expanded set of stations including recent TIGER grant recipients and potential High Speed Rail station locations, and other additional datasets.
- The release of "TOD 205: Regional Planning for TOD," the latest in our series of detailed guidebooks on TOD.
- The launch of a comprehensive webinar series on TOD issues (see notice elsewhere in this newsletter).
- Other exciting updates and new resources on TOD.

CTOD Launches New Webinar Series Sponsored by FTA

By Kelley Britt
Program Coordinator

The Center for Transit-Oriented Development (CTOD) hosted the first in its monthly webinars on June 21. More than 200 people participated in the discussion of "Understanding Mixed-Income Transit-Oriented Development." The webinar was sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Under the sponsorship of the FTA, CTOD is hosting the series of TOD-related webinars that will offer technical expertise related to planning for sustainable communities. The webinars will be made available to a broad audience and led by a CTOD staff person who will facilitate a meaningful panel discussion.

This webinar series is open to planners, practitioners, housing advocates, MPOs, local, state and federal DOTs, transit agencies, sustainable communities grantees, advocates, as well as elected officials and other decision makers.

Below is the list of the upcoming webinars to be held from 2pm to 3:30pm EST on the third Tuesday of every month (excluding August) through January 2012:

- Corridor Planning and TOD – July 19, 2011
- TOD Database Utility and Applications – September 20, 2011
- Value Capture Strategies and TOD– October 18, 2011
- Transit and Employment – November 15, 2011
- Climate and TOD – December 20, 2011
- Joint Development and TOD – January 17, 2012

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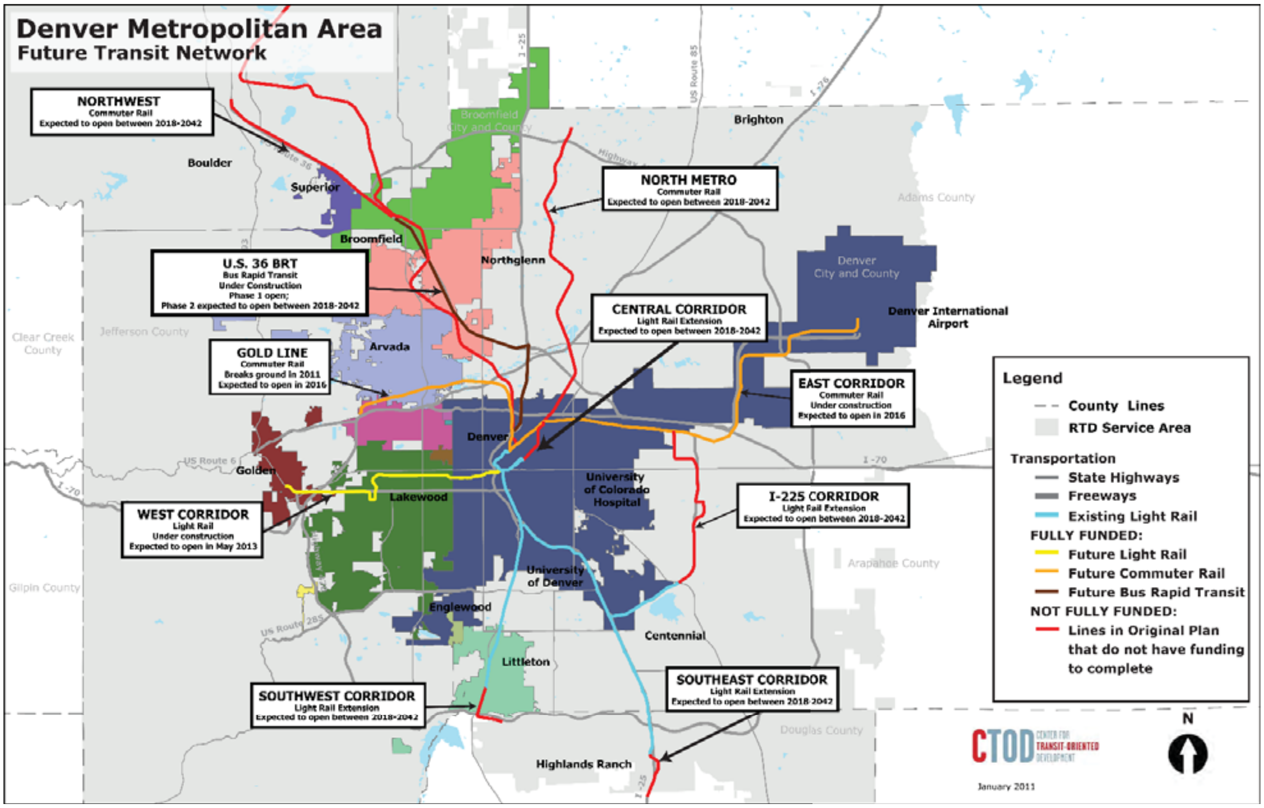

Denver's TOD Collaboration

By Bill Sadler
Program Associate

The Denver region is emerging as an innovative leader in the effort to create healthy, affordable, and sustainable communities with a range of housing types and transportation options for everyone. In 2004, voters approved a sales tax increase to fund 122 miles of new rail and bus service. Since then cities along current and future transit lines have been making plans to address opportunities and challenges.

Communities hope to build a mix of housing, office, shopping and other community resources to create a unique sense of place and reduce the need to travel long distances by car to reach destinations. In other words, they want transit-oriented development (TOD).

Regions across the country are seeing the benefits of providing greater access to opportunities and better connections between housing, jobs and essential destinations. These benefits are especially important to households with lower incomes, who spend a greater proportion of their income on transportation and housing.

Ensuring that development near transit remains affordable to low-income households is an important principle of equitable TOD. However, it often requires a concerted effort by local and regional decisionmakers to craft policies and pool funding to attract this type of mixed-income development. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, and New York City, achieving equitable TOD has required collaboration in advocating for policy change, creating land acquisition funds, and holding educational events

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Emerging TOD Collaboratives . . .

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efforts to the next level by enabling partner groups to develop the region's first comprehensive strategy for preserving and promoting equitable TOD.

Los Angeles, with the largest sales tax devoted to transit in the country, is poised to double the size of its transit system, perhaps in the next 10 years if America Fast Forward becomes a federal priority. But there is limited funding to prepare communities for the potential impact of this significant transit investment. A budding coalition of non-profit and housing groups is working to ensure that low- and moderate-income households will be able to benefit from this improved transit access.

In the Tri-State Region (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut), in partnership with regional philanthropic foundations, a new collaboration is emerging among housing, environmental, and transportation advocacy organizations. The One Region Livable Communities Collaborative is intended to foster peer learning opportunities, share best practices, and develop common approaches to issues facing the region, while also supporting multi-jurisdictional planning and implementation efforts in subareas of the region, such as Long Island, Northern New Jersey, or the I-95 corridor through Westchester County and southern Connecticut. The various political contexts of the three states in an interdependent region provides a focus for regional collaboration and information sharing, while making other areas of region-wide policy reform more challenging to achieve.

Such collaborative efforts are not easy to create, and many of these efforts were ongoing for years before formal partnership agreements were established. Each collaborative has a different governance structure and objective, though providing affordable living opportunities near transit is a common thread. In the next issue of Platform we will identify some of the shared issues facing these collaboratives, and discuss how regions are working to create effective and synergistic partnerships.

Bay Area TOD Affordable Housing (TOAH) Fund

The Great Communities Collaborative (GCC) in the San Francisco Bay Area has worked for years to maximize equitable TOD opportunities. GCC commissioned the Center for Transit-Oriented Development (CTOD) and the Bay Area Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to conduct an initial feasibility study for a fund that would be targeted to acquiring properties near quality transit for the purposes of building and preserving affordable housing, mixed-use development and other community amenities. This work helped convince the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the MPO, to dedicate $10 million as top-loss funding as long as the fund managers could raise an additional $40 million from private sources. MTC's ability to leverage non-governmental sources of funding was a key incentive that made the dedication of funds politically feasible with elected officials on the commission, and might not have been as successful if the GCC had not initiated efforts to study the feasibility of a fund. The fund is managed by a consortium of six community development finance institutions (CDFI's) led by the Low Income Investment Fund and comprised of the Enterprise Foundation, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the Opportunity Fund, Northern California Community Loan Fund and Corporation for Supportive Housing.

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The Transit Space Race: 2011

By Jeff Wood
New Media Director/Chief Cartographer
and Elizabeth Wampler
Program Associate/Data Analyst

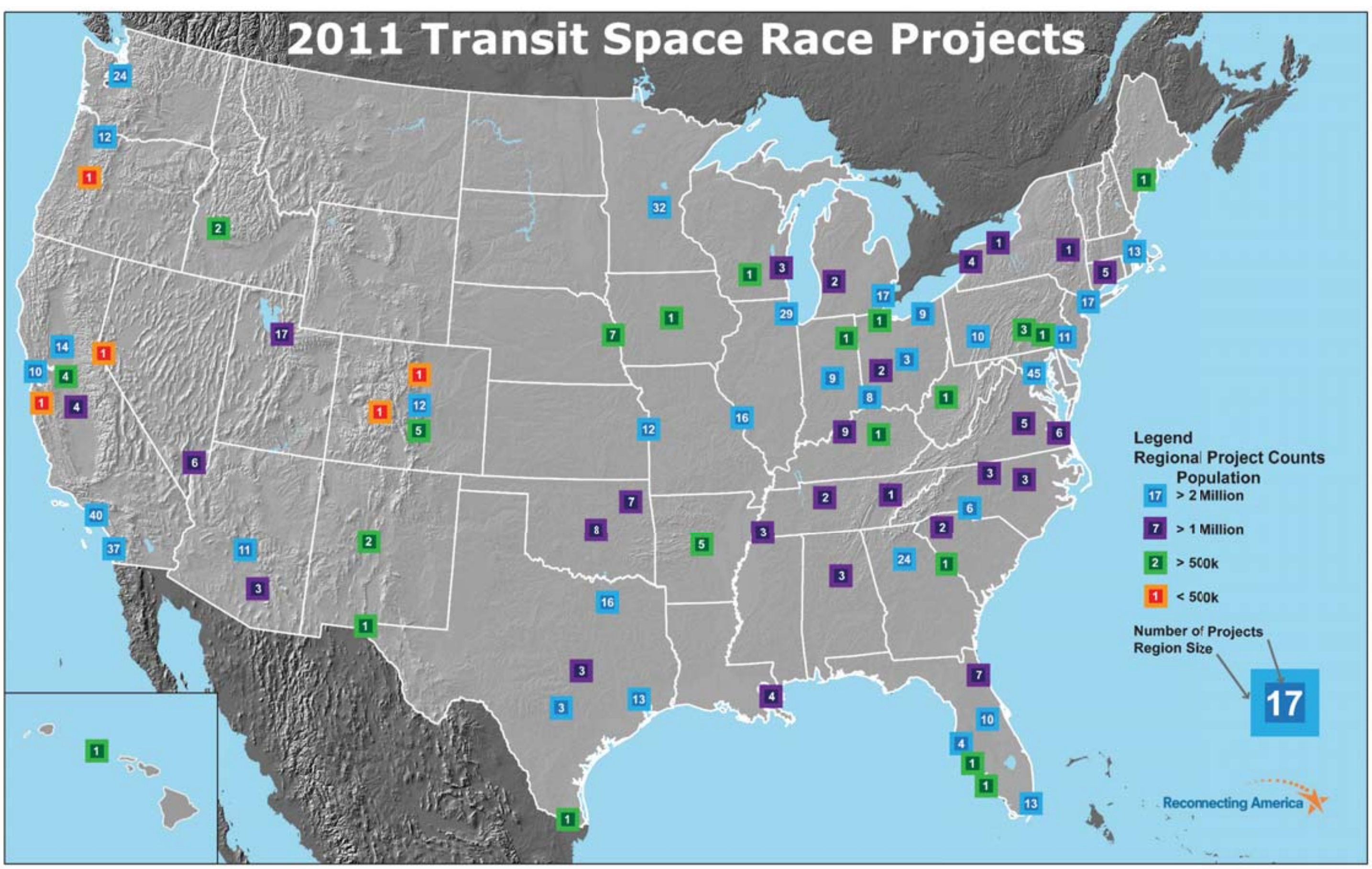
When the USSR launched the Sputnik satellite into Earth's orbit in 1957, it sparked a two-decade 'Space Race,' a competition that also resulted in a period of unprecedented investment in scientific research and education in the United States.

In the past decade, a desire for transportation options and transit has sparked a similar competition among US cities and regions.

In 1998, voters in Charlotte, North Carolina, passed a half-cent sales tax for transit. The measure dedicated part of the revenue to building a network of light rail lines that would connect the sprawling region and change the development patterns. Six years later, Denver citizens voted to fund a 119-mile network of light and commuter rail lines throughout the region.

Thus began the competition among regions to make themselves more livable and more attractive to workers and residents alike.

Other regions across the country were inspired to join the Transit Space Race, but they quickly realized that expanding their transit network one line every 10 years, which has been the typical pace of previous expansions, won't come close to meeting regional needs. Instead, regions such as Portland, Salt Lake City,



Houston, Seattle, Los Angeles, and the Twin Cities have been planning large transit network expansions that move beyond the old one-line-at-a-time production schedule.

Yet despite today's increased demand for building transit, the supply of federal support has not increased.

The federal New/Small Starts program provides funding to regions building transit networks; it is the largest source of funding for new transit projects. For several years, the federal New/Small Starts program has had roughly $1.6 billion to award annually. But with the funding so limited, the program is extremely competitive and, at most, New/Small Starts will only fund 50 percent of any single transit project.

Reconnecting America spent several months in late 2010 cataloging transit plans from the 100 largest regions in the country, as well as some known projects from smaller regions. Keeping in mind that information on transit projects changes almost daily and some existing projects may have escaped this effort, the resulting catalog and its findings offer a snapshot in time of the demand for new fixed-guideway transit in America.

Demand is Strong Across Country

Reconnecting America documented more than 640 fixed-guideway transit projects from around the country in various stages of the transit planning process.[1] Compare that number to the 45 projects in the 2011 federal New/Small Starts process to understand the pent-up demand for transit in the US. While many of the projects in this catalog are still ideas on a chalkboard and may never be constructed, the sheer number of places thinking about the value fixed-guideway transit could bring to their communities is telling.

For the 413 projects that had detailed cost estimates, the total estimated cost to build those projects is upward of $233 billion. Again, compare that number to the $1.6 billion available through New/Small Starts. Assuming the federal government provided a 50 percent match for each of those 413 projects, it would take 73 years to fund just today's demand.

A Transformative Effort

More than 30 percent of the individual projects examined would be the first fixed-guideway transit in their region. If only the projects with designated station locations were built (143 projects, about 20 percent of all of the projects documented), fixed-guideway transit would connect 3.5 million more jobs than it does today, approximately a 25 percent increase (existing fixed-guideway connects 14.1 million jobs.) Nearly 4 million households would receive enhanced transit access from these projects, with 46 percent of those being lower income households. And that doesn't include the redevelopment opportunities that would arise along these new transit corridors.

What does this ultimately mean for the United States in this current political climate? Research clearly shows that greater transit connectivity to employment and housing increases productivity and reduces costs to families. Many regions are proposing projects and coming up with their own money to build them, but they want to move faster. Additionally, there are many places that would like to move forward but need a partner. Today's Small/New Starts program is not sufficient to meet this demand and more should be done to help fulfill these visions of a more livable and sustainable America.

1 Reconnecting America identified 643 transit planned, proposed, or under construction projects in 106 regions. Of those, cost estimates were available for 413 projects, 99 projects had detailed ridership and 121 had mileage information. For 143 of the projects, there was sufficient information about station locations for Reconnecting America staff to digitize station points and analyze demographic and employment conditions within a half-mile of the stations.

Denver's TOD Collaboration . . .

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about the importance of equitable TOD.

Reconnecting America's other work in the Denver region, including the recent West Corridor TOD Implementation Strategy, led it and several other nonprofit organizations to believe a similar collaborative could work in the Denver region. Despite significant momentum toward equitable TOD, there was still a lack of understanding about how it can benefit people in the region, especially low-income populations and people of color. Moreover, while the Denver region is fortunate to have many agencies and organizations working to accomplish equitable TOD, few of these had come together to share ideas and pool funding resources to put plans into action.

A major catalyst for bringing these resources together is the recent decision by the Ford Foundation to award Reconnecting America, along with three other nonprofit organizations and a group of local foundations, a $500,000 one-year planning grant to explore the formation of a collaborative focused on regional equity. The grant is a part of the Ford Foundation's Metropolitan Opportunity work, which seeks to transform the way cities, suburbs and surrounding communities grow and plan for the future, promoting a new metropolitan approach that interweaves housing, transportation and land-use policy to foster economic growth for all.

Tentatively titled the Mile High Transit Opportunity Collaborative, the MHTOC will spend the next year engaging, educating, advocating, and providing technical assistance on a number of activities with the hope of establishing a regional equity collaborative. Some of the activities the collaborative will do in this first year are:

- Create an atlas of the Denver region's demographics and opportunities, overlaid with the planned transit network, to demonstrate the importance of this infrastructure investment to the opportunities available to all Denver residents.
- Hold educational events for local and regional stakeholders to raise awareness about equitable TOD.
- Explore the expansion of the existing Denver TOD Fund, which finances land acquisition near transit stations, to a regional level.
- Develop criteria for site-specific work, with the goal of selecting several sites to focus on in coming years.
- Provide funding for community development corporations to support their work around equitable TOD across the region.

The Ford Foundation's investment, along with major investments from the federal government, are helping to catalyze a discussion among local and regional decisionmakers about why increased transportation options and affordable housing opportunities near transit are important to the health and vitality of the regional economy. The Denver region is already far ahead of many other regions, and along with the other existing collaboratives, the region is setting a precedent for how regions can invest to become more livable, sustainable, inclusive and affordable for everyone.

For more information on TOD and equity, see www.ReconnectingAmerica.org.

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